

AUBREY SPENCER/Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Coalition is set to take on responsibility for the Community Sign downtown at Fourth and Franklin in October. The sign will be open for any organization to adver-

tise an event, but coalition members will get a discount. The coalition will also be doing some cosmetic work on the sign to add its logo in place of the Kiwanis Club's.

Coalition to take over events sign

By Aubrey Spencer

Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkansas.com

Colby's Community Sign, on the south side of the Sports Shoppe at Fourth and Franklin, will be manned by a new organization come October.

The Thomas County Coalition has decided to lease the sign, taking the responsibilities from the former caretakers, the Kiwanis Club of Colby.

The Kiwanis Club began looking for someone to take over the sign in early summer when they decided they didn't have the man-power to run it any longer, said Sue Evans, executive director of the Regional Prevention Center. The coalition, an alliance of civic and government groups which works against substance abuse by teens, met in July and agreed to acquire the lease.

"We are thrilled, as the coalition, we were able to take it on," Evans said.

Evans said she thought it is a good opportunity to have free advertising for the coalition.

Every agency active in the group that helps out with the sign by putting up letters, gets to advertise for free once during the year, she said, a \$70 value.

Anyone can advertise on the sign by calling Tricia Korthanke at the Prevention Center, 460-8177. Rates are \$40 for a half-sign advertisement and \$80 for use of the full sign. Notices run for a week at a time, Sunday through Saturday, and are limited to 29 characters a line. Groups that are active coalition members get a price-break: \$35 for half-sign and \$70 for full sign, Evans said.

"We wanted to honor our members and the community work they do," Evans said. "We also hope to encourage other agencies to become members of the coalition."

Evans said that to be considered an "active" member and get the price-break, an agency has to participate in six coalition meetings or activities throughout the year. Even if an agency can't be involved to that extent, she added, they still want them to become members.

Evans also said that when the sign is not

rented, it won't go unused. She said the coalition will put up messages, either for individual members or for the coalition as a whole. She said they might also display web addresses of their members.

Jarrod Spencer, a member of the coalition and the sign committee, said the sign will undergo some cosmetic changes in the near future. He said the Kiwanis Club logo will be removed and a coalition logo will take its place.

The Thomas County Coalition began in 1998 when law enforcement officers, parents, youths, Regional Prevention Center staff and school officials together to do something about substance abuse. The group has grown to include other agencies, including churches, juvenile services, the library, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Smart Start, Northwest Kansas Resource and Referral, and the Thomas County Community Foundation. The goal, as stated in its vision statement, is to "have a county where all people make lifelong safe and healthy choices and provide a strong environment for learning, work and leisure."

Recession may be easing, but economy still fragile

WASHINGTON (AP) — Housing construction rose in August and the number of newly laid-off workers seeking unemployment aid fell unexpectedly last week, adding to signs the recession has ended.

Still, the reports suggested a slow and fragile economic recovery. In part, that's because the increased housing starts were due solely to a surge in construction of apartment buildings — while the much larger single-family homes sector fell for the first time in six months. And jobless claims re-

main far above the levels associated with a healthy economy.

Even as the housing industry begins to recover from its worst downturn in decades, a glut of unsold homes and record levels of home foreclosures are weighing on the industry.

Construction of multifamily homes and apartments rose 1.5 percent to an annual rate of 598,000 units, the highest level since November, the Commerce Department said Thursday. That was slightly lower than the 600,000-unit pace economists had

expected. And it remains more than 70 percent below the peak rate hit in 2006.

The tentative improvements in housing are most likely a rebound "from unsustainably weak results ... reinforced by a temporary boost to demand" from the \$8,000 first-time home-buyer tax credit that ends Dec. 1, Joshua Shapiro, chief economist at MFR Inc., wrote in a note to clients.

"Gains from here on will probably be much more difficult to achieve," due to high unemployment, tight credit and a large num-

ber of new and existing homes already on the market, he said.

Applications for building permits, a gauge of future activity, rose a 2.7 percent in August to an annual rate of 579,000 units, slightly below the 580,000 level that had been forecast. Permits for single-family homes dipped 0.2 percent but rose for multifamily units by 15.8 percent.

The 1.5 percent rise in housing starts followed a small 0.2 percent dip in July. The August strength

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Senators release holds on appointees

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Kansas Sens. Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts dropped their legislative holds on 10 key presidential appointees, saying they had a "productive discussion" with the Obama administration over the destination of foreign detainees now held at Guantanamo Bay.

The senators released a joint statement Wednesday.

"Based upon these discussions," they said, "we have had the opportunity to present the concerns of many Kansans regarding the challenges and obstacles to moving detainees to Fort Leavenworth, along with the severe negative impact it would have on the educational mission of the fort and our relations with foreign nations."

The senators placed holds on 10 nominations to the Defense and Justice departments in early August. At the time, Brownback said the Kansas delegation had not had any contact with the administration since it came out that Fort Leavenworth was a candidate for the relocation. Both senators opposed the plan because of security concerns and the potential impact on the prestige of the military's Command and General Staff Col-

lege at Fort Leavenworth, which attracts international students.

The senators said they would hold up the appointments until they were allowed to meet with administration officials to present their concerns.

"We believe that the administration has a good understanding of obstacles and concerns and is giving them proper consideration," the senators said. "In a good-faith effort to continue moving this dialogue forward, we are releasing our holds on all ... nominees. We are confident that because of this good-faith dialogue, detainees will not be transferred to Fort Leavenworth."

One of those appointees was Republican congressman John McHugh, who had been nominated for secretary of the Army. He was confirmed late Wednesday after the hold was lifted.

Where the detainees will go if Fort Leavenworth is out of the picture is still uncertain. One of the other sites under consideration had been a maximum security prison in Standish, Mich., which is on the verge of closing due to budget cuts. The White House has not made any official statements on where the detainees might be moved from the naval base in southeast Cuba.

Regents to ask state to up university budgets

TOPEKA (AP) — The sour economy isn't leading the Kansas Board of Regents to think small.

The board on Wednesday decided to ask state lawmakers for an additional \$117 million over the next three fiscal years.

The first \$17 million would be requested for the fiscal year beginning July 1 to pay for higher university and college enrollment and health insurance costs.

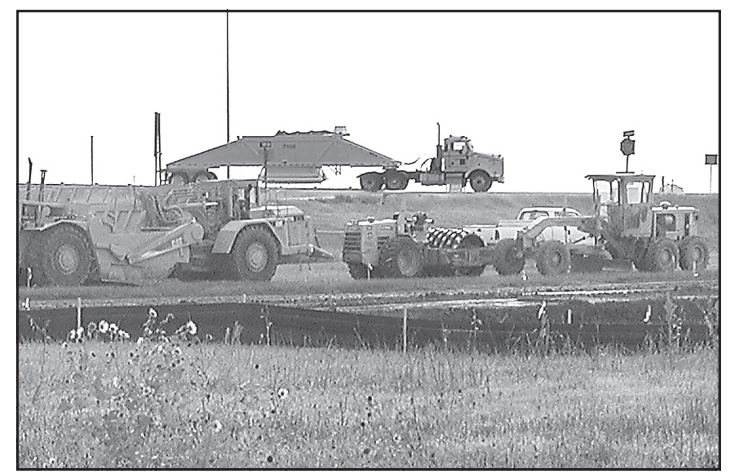
Another \$100 million would be

requested in fiscal years 2012 and 2013, part of the regents' response to Gov. Mark Parkinson's challenge to improve the state's academic rankings.

Parkinson and the Legislature must still approve the increases, which will be difficult as Kansas continues struggling to generate revenue.

State budget writers cut about \$100 million from higher education this year.

Breaking ground



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Contractors have begun moving earth at the site of the new Hampton Inn on Willow Street just west of the Bosselman Travel Center. The hotel is one of several planned for Colby's I-70 corridor.

Briefly

College board to hear reports

The Colby Community College board will meet at Monday, Sept. 21, in the board room of Thomas Hall following a dedication outside the Pierre C. Henry Allied Health Building at 5 p.m. The agenda includes reports on the president's administrative council, the Tabor Agreement on a registered nurse to a four-year nursing degree, a part-time employee agreement for the concurrent enrollment program, the August financial report, a request for additional college credit cards, college fleet vehicles and a recommendation from two advocates for the college. For information, call Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

Coaches offer coffee, talk

Join the Colby High School football staff for "Coffee with the Coaches" at 9 a.m. Saturday and every Saturday after home and away football games at the Sports Shoppe, Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue.

For information, call Eagles' Coach Chris Gardener at 460-1390.

Museum to hold art workshops

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will hold the third annual Sunflower Art Affair, a collection of art workshops for high-school age students and adults, from 1-5 p.m. Saturday at the museum. Workshops will include watercolor, chalk pastel drawings, quilt block-paper piecing, decoupage and hand-sewn wool pincushions. Registration deadline is next Wednesday, and space is limited to 10 people per workshop. There will be a small materials fee for each session. For information, call the museum at 460-4590.

Red Cross offers two classes

The American Red Cross plans a first-aid class from 9 a.m. to noon and a cardiopulmonary resuscitation class from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Thomas County Office Complex. Anyone can sign up for one or both. Registration is required by Thursday. There will be a \$45 materials fee. To register or for questions, call Sherry White at 462-7161.

College to dedicate building

Colby Community College plans a dedication ceremony for the Pierre C. Henry Allied Health Building at 5 p.m. Monday on the south side of the building. The naming honors Henry's generosity and support of education. For information, call Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

Sale offers nearly new dresses

The First Presbyterian Church plans a formal dress sale from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday through next Thursday in the church basement. There will be homecoming, Christmas and New Years dresses, as well as some

accessories. Proceeds will go to Genesis and the Salvation Army. For information, or to donate dresses, call Sue Draper at 460-6332.

Church offers Bible study

The Colby Wesleyan Church will hold Beth Moore's Bible study, "Stepping Up: A Journey through the Psalms of Ascent," from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. every Wednesday beginning next week at the Pioneer Memorial Library. A second group will meet from 9 to 11 a.m. every Thursday beginning Sept. 24 at the church, 320 W Pine. For information or to register, call Joy Rothfuss at 443-5170.

